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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today that Yudell Branch, also known as "Little Sam," age 22, of Newport News, was sentenced yesterday in the United States District Court in Norfolk by District Judge Robert G. Doumar, to a total sentence of 229 months in prison. Branch was sentenced following his guilty plea on March 23, 2004, to conspiracy to distribute crack and using a firearm in furtherance of a crack cocaine trafficking offense. Branch was held accountable for approximately 1 ½ kilograms of cocaine base, commonly known as "crack," in addition to which he received a five year sentence for possessing a firearm while engaged in drug trafficking.

This case arose following an investigation into drug dealing and violent crime in the Southeast Section of Newport News.

The case was investigated by the Newport News Violent Crimes Task Force and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Eric M. Hurt for the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Task Force, which has received a national award from the Attorney General of the United States for its effectiveness in reducing violent crime in Newport News, is comprised of detectives from the Newport News Police Department and agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and works closely with state and federal prosecutors to coordinate the investigation of some of the most violent individuals in the city.

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